A “Border-line Case”: Reading Lily Daw as “Feeble-minded” in Eudora Welty’s Short Story and Ruth Perry’s Theater Script

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Eudora Welty first published her short story “Lily Daw and the Three Ladies” in Prairie Schooner’s 1937 winter issue. In 1941, she revised the story for A Curtain of Green and Other Stories. In her revisions, Welty deconstructs the normate’s expectation that mental disability enfeebles the disabled. She disrupts the able-minded narratives pushed onto Lily Daw and gives Lily rebellious narrative power through the assembly of her hope chest and defiance of the ladies’ expectations of her sexuality (Boe, 2016). Thirty-one years later in 1972, playwright Ruth Perry created a new Lily Daw in her script Lily Daw and the Three Ladies: a play in one act based on a story by Eudora Welty. This one-act play expunges much of the complexity of Lily’s fight against prevailing eugenic ideas of her sexual and authorial identity. Perry’s Lily is “very chic” (Perry, 1972, p. 34), brazen and attractive. Perry constructs Lily in a way that appears to have more agency than Welty’s original. In Welty’s story, Lily’s power is subliminal. Welty does not privilege the reader with insight into Lily’s inner thoughts or matrimonial hopes. Readers fin-
ish the story unsettled about their own complicity in circumscribing the individualism of the mentally disabled. Perry, on the other hand, smooths out the characters’ rough edges for the audience’s comfort, which erases the purpose of Welty’s subversive narrative of mental health. No scholarship heretofore has analyzed Perry’s script against Welty’s original short story.

In the “Production Notes” to Perry’s script (1972), she presents a question for the director: “Was Lily Daw actually feeble-minded?” (p. 34). The term “feeble-minded” in the age of eugenics encompassed any mental condition eugenicists considered a deviation from the “norm” (Snyder & Mitchell, 2010, p. 79). Because eugenicists’ diagnosis relied on the “social consciousness” of the medical community, the term “feeble-minded” exists in an ambiguous position between “biological and social discourses” (Snyder & Mitchell, 2010, p. 82). That Perry asks if Lily is “feeble-minded” as opposed to mentally disabled, therefore, immediately complicates Lily’s portrayal. Can we diagnose her as feeble-minded on social grounds? Perry’s questioning of Lily’s mental state influences the audacity and overt sexual interest that characterizes her theatrical Lily Daw. Is Perry able to create a free-spirited Lily Daw because she does not think Lily is feeble-minded? Or, with the decline of eugenics by the 1970s, does Perry believe it no longer matters whether Lily has a mental disability? As in Welty’s original, how Lily Daw is perceived and diagnosed—by the townspeople, the director, and the audience—influences whether her sexuality and narrative authority result from a subversion of able-minded ideals or from an elision of threatening difference.

Before Lily even speaks, her physical description diverges into competing interpretations of her burgeoning sexuality. In the notes

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1 While the terms “feeble-minded,” “mental disability,” and “intellectual disability” have their own connotations and various levels of acceptance by people in the disability community, for the sake of readability, I will vary my use of the terms. I will use “feeble-minded” mostly to describe Lily’s condition within the narrative, since Welty uses the term purposefully to evoke the social categorization of mental variance. Mental and intellectual disability will mostly cover how Lily’s condition relates to larger issues surrounding invisible mental impairments. Apart from these distinctions, I will use them largely interchangeably.
setting up the first scene of the play, Lily is “in her teens and delightfully fresh and pretty, yet with something a little strange and distraight in her face” (Perry, 1972, p. 5). From the offset, Lily possesses a body of contradictions, a body that reflects the binary nature of theatrical characters: “binary traits make the character a paradigm, a crossroads of contradictory properties” (Dictionary of the Theatre, 1998, p. 49). Young and beautiful, but not quite normal—Lily’s uncertain mental state refuses the strict narrative order doctors thrust onto the female body (Kuppers, 2009, p. 148). Her hair, “loose on her shoulders” (Perry, 1972, p. 5), suggests both virginal innocence and sexual promiscuity. Her dress, “decorated with strategically placed appliqués of neon-bright flowers [or painted with brilliant stylized animals in lively action]” (Perry, 1972, p. 5), bespeaks a quirky girl with unusual taste. Beyond characterizing Lily as kitschy, her dress speaks to Perry’s stylizing of her character. The phrases “strategically placed” and “brilliant stylized” underline Perry’s conscious construction of Lily in the ambiguous territory of feeble-mindedness. If Lily need not be feeble-minded, her character sketch “strategically” provides details of Lily’s physical description Welty left out. The details direct the audience’s diagnosis away from intellectual disability. Even as Perry develops Lily into a sexual being, Lily’s original independence surfaces. Her free-flowing hair could signal promiscuity, but it also hints at greater agency. The “prancing horses with manes and tails flowing” (Perry, 1972, p. 5) on her clothes have free-flowing hair like Lily. Lily plasters herself with images of liberated beings. The play has multiple layers of construction: Perry (1972) composes a Lily Daw, “chic but quite unusual” (p. 16), who in turn participates in her own identity composition.

Lily’s first interactions on stage further cement her sexuality as a topic of tension. As Lily pastes cutouts of the word LOVE on the post office window, the store proprietor Ed Newton “stands watching her” (Perry, 1972, p. 6) and chastises her for defacing federal property. Before Lily opens her mouth, she is subject to the male gaze and a paternalistic warning. The audience orients itself with the male voyeuristic gaze that treats the female as sexual spectacle (Freedman, 1990, p. 59). When Ed mentions “handsome” Bill Ca-
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sey (Perry, 1972, p. 8) will soon enter the store, Lily displays sexual interest with her reply: “(smiling shyly). Maybe I’ll wait” (Perry, 1972, p. 7). Bill reciprocates her interest with his lines about Lily: “(grinning and winking at Ed). Pretty cute, if you ask me” (Perry, 1972, p. 8) and “Lily Daw---(Gives a muted wolf whistle)” (Perry, 1972, p. 9). Whether or not the characters read Lily as feeble-minded determines the degree of her sexual threat. Leading up to Welty’s publication of the story, eugenicists typified feeble-minded females as sexual threats with a “sexually loaded, gender-specific, permanent condition” (Kline, 2005, p. 33). Not only did their sexuality threaten to tarnish the white race with future degenerates, but their inability “to understand the ruses of modern masculinity” (Snyder & Mitchell, 2010, p. 86) also predisposed them to licentious behavior with sexually interested men. If Lily is not feeble-minded, the reader could construe Lily’s interest as an innocent crush. But if she is, Bill’s lines explicitly link Lily to a sexual threat because they portray her as sexually desirable. By giving voice to the boys of Victory who have sworn not to date Lily Daw, Perry turns Lily’s sexuality into a greater menace to the town’s stability.

Bill’s wolf whistle prompts a moment in the play in which the deep-seated social anxieties of the three ladies, Mrs. Carson, Mrs. Watts, and Aimee Slocum, translate from the characters to the audience. Aimee Slocum’s line directly following Bill’s wolf whistle—“I’m glad we wrote to Ellisville” (Perry, 1972, p. 9)—reminds the audience of the ladies’ plan to send Lily to the Ellisville Institute for the Feeble-Minded of Mississippi. Lily does not threaten Bill Casey. She threatens the three ladies whose expectations of female sexuality, particularly feeble-minded sexuality, she upends. When the women discuss Lily’s matrimonial interest, the suggestion prompts Mrs. Carson to reply “(almost wildly)” (Perry, 1972, p. 12). If Lily is already slightly wild with her free-flowing hair and affinity with horses, her desire to marry begins to also corrupt the women. Between her influence on Bill Casey and on the three ladies, her removal to Ellisville becomes critical. The ladies’ determination to institutionalize Lily suggests that, regardless of Perry’s determination to leave Lily’s diagnosis up to the director, the text maintains the ladies’ same per-
spective on Lily as in the original: feeble-mindedness equals danger. This contamination might also speak to why Perry needs to alleviate audience discomfort. A feeble-minded character forces the normate to look outside their complacent normalcy. Once the audience interprets the character as “feeble-minded,” they will keep these assumptions with them regardless of the character’s movements (Reinelt, 1994, p. 106). Lily’s subversive independence throws off normate assumptions, which causes the audience unease as they cling to their presuppositions. Just as Lily’s sexuality infects the ladies, a liberated person with a mental disability destabilizes the superiority that elevates the able-minded. Such an interpretation suggests readers have not come as far in accepting mental variance as might be hoped for in the thirty years since Welty’s publication.

As the play proceeds and the ladies enter Lily’s house, the audience moves into Lily’s domain, which affords her multiple avenues for self-expression that subvert social expectations. The most prominent symbol of Lily’s self-identification in Welty’s original story is the hope chest (Boe, 2016). Welty (1980) introduces Lily into the story by connecting her to the hope chest: “Lily was there, in the dark of the hall, kneeling on the floor by a small open trunk” (p. 5). In Perry’s play, Lily’s introduction at Ed’s store connects her to overt sexuality and kitsch. Once Lily returns home, she assumes more of the authority with which Welty invested her. She enters the domestic scene singing her own version of a church hymn and carrying her hope chest:

> Bringing in the cheese,
> We shall come rejoicing
> Bringing in the cheese.
>
> (Sets the trunk down in the center and opens the lid ... and faces the LADIES a shade defiantly). (Perry, 1972, p. 16).

After refusing Mrs. Carson’s correction of the hymn, Lily directs the ladies’ attention to her hope chest. She refuses to abide by their “correct” way of remembering the hymn, just as she refuses to accept their denial that she will marry. The location of the hope chest

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2 The “correct” lyrics are “bringing in the sheaves” (Perry, 1972, p. 16).
“in the center” of the stage draws the audience’s attention to the focal point of Lily’s defiance. Perry makes the most of gestural space, space “created by the actors’ movements,” to “define the exact limits of [the actors’] individual and collective territories” (Dictionary of the Theatre, 1998, p. 161), in this case, Lily’s territory around her hope chest and home. The actor playing Lily “strikes a pose, one foot forward, hand on hip, head at a saucy angle” (Perry, 1972, p. 16), claiming her space. Her movements give her agency directly contradictory to general social definitions of disabled people (Kuppers, 2003, p. 5). She returns to the contents of her chest throughout her distressing conversation with the ladies, drawing comfort from her washcloth and soap as she combats their direction for her narrative. While Perry might use Lily’s singing and hope chest to magnify that “something [is] a little strange” about her, the power Welty endowed in the hope chest remains. Lily’s creativity could work toward othering her through mental difference or empowering her with authorial independence.

Perry’s addition of Lily’s hat-making offers another example of the double interpretations, of kitsch and of agency, in Lily’s fight for authorial power. As the three ladies journey to Lily’s house, they discover that the milliner sells what Aimee calls “Lily’s crazy hats” in Biloxi (Perry, 1972, p. 15). Aimee’s word choice introduces mental disability into the scene, thereby reinforcing the ladies’ diagnosis of feeble-mindedness. Because the women think so highly of their charity toward Lily, they do not think Lily could support herself. When Lily shows the ladies her hope chest, she also demands they acknowledge the authorship of her hat: “(…head at a saucy angle.) Like my hat?” (Perry, 1972, p. 16). Perry likely imagined this gesture would elicit laughter from the audience, but Lily’s action insists on recognition. Her hat-making is integral to her future: once she marries she will sell her hats in big cities. This version of Lily Daw knows what she wants. But the three ladies cannot tolerate her creativity when it jeopardizes Ellisville. In order to mitigate the threat her imagination poses to their narrative for Lily, the ladies push Lily’s dream out of reality. Aimee assumes Lily has imagined the proposal: “You mean you’ve been pretending some man asked you to marry him?”
(Perry, 1972, p. 18). Jim Ferris (2009) says that fictionality allows the audience the “freedom to engage emotionally with the work” (p. 58) because distance from the work begets safety. Ferris refers to theatrical performances of disability, but the three ladies apply the same theory to Lily’s dream. Aimee’s interpretation comforts them because “a little pretending does no harm” (Perry, 1972, p. 18). The women undercut her authorship to ensure Lily will do “no harm” to the town. They condone her imagination when it is outside reality, but they cannot allow her narration to empower her.

Lily’s body is a battleground for the construction of her creativity and performance. The Dictionary of the Theatre’s (1998) definition of “body”—“the actor’s body is situated somewhere between [...] a natural, spontaneous body and a puppet-like body whose strings are held and manipulated by its subject or spiritual procreator, the director” (p. 34)—applies equally to the ladies’ manipulations of Lily’s body as to those of Perry or the director. The women consider Lily their charitable work, the ward of the local Helping Hand Committee. They see themselves as her “spiritual procreator[s]” (Dictionary of the Theatre, 1998, p. 34) whose duty to baptize her Baptist, they believe, “(go[es] without saying)” (Perry, 1972, p. 22). If cultural and historical expectations constantly pressure the body to perform (Butler, 1990, p. 272), Lily’s body is vulnerable to the ladies’ and Perry’s expectations of gender performance. The women try to mold Lily into a socially acceptable female with correct sexual interests, hair accessories, and hymn lyrics. Perry molds Lily into a palatable Southern heroine for her audience. The very production of the play provides another avenue for Lily’s authorial power because the theatrical body is “always productive,” “produc[ing] [itself] through [its] acting labor” (Reinelt, 1994, p. 106). But the domination of the normate’s creative ambitions overcome this chance to invest Lily with creativity. Conflation of the two directorial manipulations might work toward a conflation of the ladies’ diagnosis of feeble-mindedness with the director’s. If Perry does not think Lily’s character sketch can refute a diagnosis of feeble-mindedness, she might view Lily as mentally inferior to the other characters. Once Perry accepts that the ladies’ “motives are unques-
tionably good” (Perry, 1972, p. 35) it is no great leap to agree with, or at least sympathize with, their paternalistic diagnosis.

Perry’s sympathetic characterization of Mrs. Carson, Mrs. Watts, and Aimee Slocum suggests the playwright might also align the ladies with her audience. Perry (1972) introduces Mrs. Carson as “warm and friendly” (p. 10). Asides like “(a bit worried)” and “(still troubled)” (Perry, 1972, p. 11) to describe the ladies as they confer about Ellisville make them seem invested in Lily’s well-being. By the short story’s publication in 1941, the “Age of Sterilization” had begun to fade (Keely, 2004, p. 217). By the late 1960s, American society had begun to criticize public mental institutions (Trent, 1994, p. 256-8). Some considered the institution “dehumanizing,” but many thought it only needed improvements (Trent, 1994, p. 258-9). The asides Perry attributes to the ladies reflect this ambivalent attitude toward the institution with which her contemporary audience would have been acquainted. As they put Lily on the train to Ellisville in the closing scene, Mrs. Carson “(grieved for her)” says, “Lily, try to understand! No one wanted to marry you! We’re saving you! Couldn’t you at least try to be happy about it?” (Perry, 1972, p. 26). Mrs. Carson wants Lily to want Ellisville. The exchange traps Lily between infantile and adult identities, for the 1950s and ’60s infantilized intellectually disabled people (Trent, 1994, p. 266), but Mrs. Carson wants Lily to consent as an adult. She can assuage her conscience if Lily accepts the ladies’ narrative. Perry needs her audience to believe the women want the best for Lily because the ladies represent the paternalistic normate. The audience wants to leave the performance satisfied and validated, a desire Welty’s original refuses and Perry’s happy ending rewards. The ending, in which the ladies prepare Lily to marry the xylophone man, extends Welty’s storyline for closure.

Perry’s introduction of colonialism into the script parallels the play’s management of social anxieties surrounding otherness. Perry (1972) compares Mrs. Watts’s gift of her caramel cake recipe to Lily to how “Isabella might have spoken when she pledged her jewels to Columbus” (p. 23). The benevolent paternalism that fueled Western imperialism defines the ladies’ savior complex. Just as colo-
nialism sanitized exotic colonies to fit Western ideals, Perry erases Lily’s complexities to conform to the audience’s expectation of a happy ending. Perry’s elided script gives the audience a sanitized reality. Film, and arguably theater as well, has the “apparent ability to achieve precision, exactness and ‘reality’” (Giddings, 1990, p. 6). Theater’s “apparent ability” risks making Lily’s portrayal in the play seem like reality when it is still only the perception of the playwright, director, and actors. The audience might accept the play as the “feeble-minded” reality, but they also must understand the play as a fiction to feel “emotionally cushioned and safe” (Ferris, 2009, p. 58), safe in their distance from the feeble-minded. Perry alleviates “aesthetic anxiety” by making Lily’s body visually attractive despite her difference and “existential anxiety” by marrying Lily off to the xylophone man to circumscribe her independence (Ferris, 2009, p. 58). Cultural anxieties that stem from a person’s “otherness” once again link to imperialism. Perry recasts the story’s anxieties to appeal to her audience. Mrs. Carson’s plea to Lily at the station, referenced in the previous paragraph, is Perry’s justification of her alterations to Welty’s text: Try to understand! No one wanted to read a story that makes him or her uncomfortable! I’m saving the story!

Perry’s (1972) belief that Welty does not “commit herself on the issue” of Lily’s diagnosis (p. 34) allows her to rewrite the ending of the story for closure. Perry considers Welty’s lack of commitment a lacuna she or the director must fill. But Petra Kuppers (2003) points out that giving someone the label ‘disabled’ can also undercut any answering back” (p. 5). Because society conceives of disability as a “lack of agency” (Kuppers, 2003, p. 5), diagnosis silences Lily. By not “commit[ting] herself,” Welty allows Lily to speak for herself; she does not restrict Lily to the intellectually disabled’s narrative of silence. Perry’s Lily, perhaps in spite of the contamination of feeble-mindedness, also speaks through gestural space and creativity. Yet Perry’s script distorts the symbols of Lily’s narrative power like the hope chest. Bill Casey takes control of the hope chest’s fate when he brings it back to Lily at the play’s close (Perry, 1972, p. 31). The hope chest turned wedding cake stand becomes part of the town’s narrative for Lily. In the 1941 story, Welty separates Lily from
the hope chest at the story’s end to magnify how society privileges able-minded narratives. Perry enlists the hope chest in a happy ending that the male able-minded orchestrate. She adheres to the classic theatrical dichotomy in which the male, Bill, is the “mobile agent” and the female, Lily, is the “object to be actively transformed by him” (Freedman, 1990, p. 59). The town pushes dependence, not interdependence, onto Lily. Perry dissipates the discomfort that the disappearance of the hope chest raises for Welty’s reader with traditional gender dynamics that re-inscribe Lily’s lack of agency.

Perry’s question of whether or not Lily is feeble-minded and her comment that Welty never diagnosed Lily raise the matter of how important diagnosis is to characterization. Perry (1972) laments the lack of a “competent medical opinion” on Lily’s case (p. 35). But Lily is not a real person with a real condition; she is a construct of Welty’s creation. Perry’s need to define Lily’s mental state bespeaks the anxiety surrounding invisible impairments that finds its roots in nineteenth-century medical practices (Kuppers, 2009, p. 148). Based on her questions in the “Production Notes,” Perry’s script functions as her own attempt to discover the meaning of Welty’s Lily Daw. Erin Rentschler (as cited in Giddings, 1990) believes that adaptation “amounts to an act of understanding, the attempt to read one’s own meaning into and out of the texted realities that surround us” (p. 13). Perry’s script is her own diagnosis of the story. Kuppers (2003) says that the “performance of disability relies on the understanding that disability is transparent, uni-vocal, easy to see” (p. 54). Lily’s mental state is not transparent or easy to see; it eludes the diagnosis Perry strives to discover. Perry (1972) thinks, “Certainly the xylophone player would not agree” (p. 35) that Lily is feeble-minded, but the “well-meaning ladies of the town” (p. 34) believe she is. Perry’s first statement assumes the feeble-minded cannot be sexually desirable mates, and the second does not consider that the “matter-of-fact middle-aged ladies” (Perry, 1972, p. 34) might not have cared if Lily was actually feeble-minded as long as they were in control. Unable to reconcile the contradictions in Welty’s story and her own ambivalent characterization of Lily’s sexuality, Perry (1972) concludes in her notes that Lily might have been a
“border-line case” (p. 34). Rather than grapple with the social ambiguity of the term “feeble-minded” and accept that Lily is a literary construction, Perry (1972) creates a script that encourages readers to invent their own “special slant” (p. 34) on Lily.

Many of the differences in Welty’s short story and Perry’s script result from the differences in medium. If theatrical staging’s of mental disability require transparency to be “wholly reproducible in theater” (Kuppers, 2003, p. 54) Perry cannot reproduce Welty’s Lily on the stage without losing the nuance of Welty’s non-diagnosis. One theorist (as cited in Reinelt, 1994) declares “visibility is always a trap, doomed to promise knowledge it cannot deliver” (p. 98). George Bluestone (as cited in Giddings, 1990) believes writing can better represent mental states than visual media (p. 19). According to these critics, Perry was doomed to create an inadequate portrait of Lily’s interiority. Many performance artists surmount the obstacle of visualizing intellectual impairments by recruiting actors with mental disabilities, upsetting the audience’s complacent gaze, and supplying the disabled community with a platform for self-exploration.

The playwright who equates the feeble-minded heroine with a small bird almost pecked to death by other birds “for being different,” as Perry (1972) does in her “Production Notes” (p. 35), invests the intellectually disabled with pity, not dignity. Perry, who does not experiment with alternative ways to stage interiority, disappoints the audience by posing a question her play cannot answer.

Dangers in the theatrical adaptation of a short story could also affect Perry’s divergences. Welty wrote her first draft of the story at the end of the eugenics boom; Perry wrote decades after the scare. The different social and cultural moments in which the two women composed account for some of the disconnects, for “[n]either the product nor the process of adaptation exist in a vacuum: they all have a context—a time and a place, a society and a culture” (Gordon & Jubin, 2015, p. 7). Gordon and Jubin (2015) believe critics should not judge an adaptation based on fidelity to its source (p. 5-6). This paper has not sought to point out why Perry’s adaptation is inferior to Welty’s story because of any lack of fidelity. Rather, it has used deviations in Perry’s script to demonstrate the tenuous and contro-
versial nature of Lily’s mental state. Welty’s text is a static product. A play is mutable, subject to change with each new director and actor. The theatrical adaption of a story that subtly subverts eugenics tropes risks exposing Lily to diagnosis. As Barbara Freedman (1990) says, “theatre has no allegiance but to ambivalence” (p. 74). The ambivalence Perry produces generates multiple cases for diagnosis, not multiple ways for Lily to exercise agency and interdependence. Whereas Welty forces readers to grapple with the complexities of Lily’s sexuality and independence, Perry allows directors to place their own narrative authority onto the story. If directors do not read Welty’s original, they might lose Welty’s subtle rebellions and create a minstrel spectacle of exaggerations.

Perry’s erasure of disability is partly due to the difference in audience experience between a written text and visual performance. The reader of a short story goes through a solitary process of understanding, whereas the spectator of a play has a “collective experience” (Giddings, 1990, p. 4). Social pressures, boiling to the surface in a room filled with social peers, might demand a more white-washed presentation of Lily’s story. Conversely, a collective experience could force the audience to confront the social anxieties the narrative explores. The reader of a short story could remain comfortably distant from mental disability by virtue of reading’s solitary nature. Given the reflective nature of Welty’s story, in this case a solitary reader might have a more enlightening experience because the reader would have time to process Welty’s subversive language. Perry does not take advantage of theater’s ability to tackle social fears because she suppresses Lily’s difference. Even if Perry tries to make the audience comfortable with her portrayal of Lily, she still grapples with the “key tension” in any performance of disability that balances the magnification of disability’s difference and amplification of its sameness (Ferris, 2009, p. 57). She adapts the short story and its ambiguities in a way that tries to mitigate the tension in a performance of the invisible.

“Shall we sigh for Ellisville robbed of a potentially talented basket-weaver, or shall we join the happy guests at Lily’s wedding with the xylophone player?” (Perry, 1972, p. 35). So ends Perry’s section
about Lily in her “Production Notes.” Beyond the tongue-in-cheek reference to basket-weaving and the assumption that marriage is a woman’s best option, Perry’s question broaches an important issue in the discussion of intellectual disability and theatrical adaptations. Perry portrays the two avenues for Lily’s future as black and white, good and bad. The reader must judge which option will make Lily happier. Once again, Perry directs the power of interpretation at the audience, not the mentally disabled character herself. In turn, can the scholar without personal experience with intellectual disability definitively determine how Perry’s play affects the disability community? A critic cannot declare Perry’s construction of feeble-mindedness either “good” or “bad” without falling into the same dichotomy Perry sets up in her final question. After all, the theatrical Lily Daw has moments of shining creativity as well as withdrawals of personal agency. Lily should be able to accept help without the forfeiture of her individuality. The script exemplifies the conversations that continue to play out in regards to how the invisible can become visible while maintaining the dignity of the individual whose story comes under adaptation. There is no clearly demarcated fork in the road to guide the disability scholar toward “correct” representations. Mrs. Watts tells Lily at the train station to “face reality” (Perry, 1972, p. 27). To face reality is to acknowledge that Lily Daw is only a literary character. A literary character, nonetheless, whose treatment by fellow townspeople, adaptors, directors, and spectators because of her mental variance can warn the reader against the simplification of disabled people and encourage efforts toward interdependence.

References


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